

HIGHLAND UPDATE

Highland Cluster has over 50-year tradition of education excellence

BY NICOLETTE "NIKKI" DENNIS

Highland Cluster leader principal

Nestled between I-25 and I-40, the **Highland Cluster** serves some of Albuquerque's oldest neighborhoods and schools with a rich tradition and history. For over fifty years, the Highland Cluster has had a tradition of excellence in education.

From the University and Nob Hill neighborhoods on the west end of the district to the communities located near the foothills which make up the Four Hills community, many of Albuquerque's scientific and medical landmarks can be found within the Highland Cluster. These include the east University of New Mexico campus, Kirtland AFB, Sandia National Laboratories, Presbyterian and Lovelace Hospitals, Lovelace Respiratory, the New Mexico Expo grounds, the Nob Hill shopping district and the Highland Theater.

The Highland Cluster's diverse student body represents the diversity of New Mexico and the United States. The cluster's students represent a wide range of ethnic, cultural and racial groups who speak approximately twenty languages.

Quality honors

This past year Quality New Mexico presented the Piñon to five Highland Cluster Elementary Schools: Wherry Elementary, Sandia Base Elementary, Hawthorne Elementary, Emerson Elementary and Bandelier Elementary. In addition to these five awards, Quality New Mexico presented Kirtland Elementary School with the prestigious Road Runner Award, which was presented to only three organizations in New Mexico.

The Highland Cluster was the only cluster (or school district for that matter) in the state to have six schools recognized for their commitment to "quality" implementation and continuous improvement. A core group of stakeholders from all cluster schools, except the new Southeast Heights Elementary

School which will open in August 2004, have been trained in the quality management and continuous improvement strategies. These strategies are employed daily to meet the needs of our diverse student population and community.

Magnet program

In September 2001, the Highland Cluster launched the Scientific Research and Technology Magnet Program as part of a federal \$6.6 million grant to six Albuquerque Public Schools clusters. The Highland magnet program increases academic choices for students through expanded electives in science and technology and sophisticated video conferencing equipment at several schools. Students enjoy real-time interactions with scientists at the Lovelace Respiratory Research Institute, as well as learning opportunities with local centers of scientific research such as Sandia National Labs, Kirtland AFB, and the University of New Mexico. The magnet approach provides peer-learning opportunities with other Highland school students also.

The Highland Cluster consists of fourteen schools: ten elementary, three middle schools, and one high school. This week we will look at the secondary schools within the cluster; next week we will focus on the Highland Cluster's Elementary Schools:

Highland High School

From expanded science offerings through the magnet program to Advance Placement classes in all core subjects, to online learning opportunities in a variety of courses to one of the largest gifted programs in the city, **Highland High School** offers students a wide-range of educational choices.

Highland's gifted program has won two out of the past three state championships in the We The People Competition. Highland's MESA (Math, Engineering, Science Achievement), Academic Decathlon and outstanding music groups continue to receive state and even national recognition.

Students who wish to participate in athletics have a wide-range of choices, which include club sports such as water polo and rugby as well as girls and boys interscholastic athletic teams such as volleyball, softball, baseball, soccer, swimming and football.

Highland High School offers the only block schedule in the city which allows students to take more elective courses, as well as elect for concurrent enrollment at TV-I or UNM. Go Hornets!

Hayes Middle School partners with the University of New Mexico Medical School to offer students an enriched curriculum and a health career focus.

Hayes recently added technical writing courses and its science curriculum is aligned with Highland High School. The school boasts of a new spa-like fitness center.

Van Buren Middle School offers students expanded math and technology programs which begin to prepare students for careers in the medical field.

Van Buren is a completely networked school offering four computer labs equipped with digital video, new computers in each classroom and a state of the art Media Library.

Teacher Ada Ripberger is the 2003 Teacher of the Year for Technology in Education.

Wilson Middle School captured the highest overall honors in the New Mexico MESA Statewide Math and Science Jamboree Competition.

Wilson's academic offerings for gifted students include gifted science, one of the only schools in New Mexico to offer students such a choice. Students may also elect to take enriched and Pre-Advance Placement Classes in math and language arts.

Wilson recently combined its orchestra and band to create a symphonic group called Orchestra Grande.



Photo by Todd Berenger

Proteus supports Airborne Laser

The Proteus, a one-of-a-kind aircraft built by Scaled Composites LLC of Mojave, Calif., flew into Kirtland AFB recently. The aircraft was in New Mexico concluding a series of tests designed to prove the effectiveness of the unique target board attached to its underside. The Proteus will play a vital role in future tests of the Airborne Laser. The Proteus flew a series of missions over White Sands Missile Range, during which lasers fired from 8,000-foot-high North Oscura Peak registered against special sensors embedded in the missile-shaped target board.

AF Climate Survey results reveal progress

BY NICOLE GAMEZ

Air Force Climate Survey team

RANDOLPH AFB, Texas (AFPN)—The 2003 Air Force Climate Survey results have been analyzed, and final reports have been released to unit-level leaders for action. The survey ran Oct. 1 to Nov. 23.

"As the leaders of the world's greatest air and space force, we share a commitment to continually seek improvement. The survey results give our leaders targets for improvement from the people who know best—our Airmen," said Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. John P. Jumper. "For the survey to be a true success, leaders must now take this information and use it to focus their efforts within their organizations. I urge leaders to brief the results to their members and then translate that information into action."

The survey included the active duty, civilian employees, Reserve, Guard and nonappropriated-fund civilians. More than 50 percent of the total force took the survey.

It addressed job characteristics, unit resources, core values, supervision unit chain of command, training and development, and job enhancement. It also focused on teamwork, participation and involvement, recognition, unit flexibility, general satisfaction and unit performance outcomes.

The Air Force Manpower Agency's survey team worked with experts at the U.S. Air Force Academy's department of management to ensure accurate analysis of the survey data.

Each question was answered on a six-point scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly dis-

agree." The total percentage of "agree" responses are the sum of "strongly agree," "agree" and "slightly agree" percentages.

Air Force-wide, unit performance outcomes, job characteristics and core values were the highest rated factors at 94-, 92-, and 87-percent agreement respectively. These results indicate that people believe they are meeting their missions' goals, find their jobs important and challenging and believe that their unit understands and demonstrates Air Force core values, officials said.

Eighty-six percent of the survey participants said that people in their work groups exercise teamwork and perform essential work that is considered above and beyond the call of duty. Eighty-five percent of respondents agreed that they have the required training to do their jobs, and that they have opportunities for professional growth.

Overall, supervision was rated at 84 percent, while 81 percent believed their chain of command positively influenced the direction, people and culture of their units.

Although active-duty Airmen and appropriated-fund civilian participants' ratings increased from the 2002 survey, the results showed room for improvement in several areas. Seventy-eight percent of the respondents are generally satisfied with their jobs, are involved in their work place's decisions and believe their units respond well to change.

Since the first survey in 1997, acknowledgment of exceptional performance and management of time, people and equipment areas continue to score low in the survey; however, both have continued to

increase. Comments received in the recognition area indicate that a simple "thank you" for a job well done can be just as effective as a formal award, officials said.

Sixty-five percent of participants agree morale in their unit is high. This number has increased from 55 percent in 1997.

In comparison with other components, active-duty Airmen rate all factors lower than reservists, guardsmen and civilians. Officers consistently rate all factors higher than enlisted Airmen and civilians with the exception of the unit resources factor.

Since 2002, the number of active-duty Airmen (deployed and at home station) who intend to remain in the Air Force has decreased significantly.

Analysis by Air Force Academy officials revealed that the chain of command as a whole, rather than the commander or supervisor alone, drives performance, satisfaction, organizational commitment and one's intent to remain in the Air Force. Further analysis revealed that of all the factors the survey addresses, an Airman's career intentions are most affected by organizational commitment and satisfaction, not by work hours.

According to the survey results, ratings increased in units where leaders used the results positively. The 2003 factor ratings were compared against the question, "Did my leader use the results in a positive way?" The results showed leaders who shared results and used ideas and suggestions had higher positive responses in all factors. Leaders that took action on previous survey results also increased their units' overall scores, officials said.